

For immediate release
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City of Columbus Storm Recovery Update

(COLUMBUS) Mayor Michael B. Coleman continues to lead Columbus' effort to address the damage left behind by the snow and ice storm of December 23. The Emergency Operations Center is open today as central control for City Recovery Operations, Public Service Department Director Henry Guzmán has been appointed to manage coordinated City teams.

Employees from across City Divisions and Departments are working cooperatively to focus on priority areas:

1. Snow and ice removal from City streets
2. Tree and brush removal from the public right-of-way
3. Ensuring shelter is available for those still without power
4. Preparing for the impact of melting snow and ice in the coming days

Mayor Coleman continues to be in contact with regional stakeholders, including the Red Cross and American Electric Power, for regular updates on shelters and progress on restoring electrical services to residents. Mayor Coleman and his family lost power when the storm hit last week, it was restored early today.

The City of Columbus declared a snow emergency on December 23, and Mayor Coleman is working with Franklin County to have the City declared a Federal Disaster Area by FEMA, which will make the City and homeowners eligible for Emergency Aid.

SNOW AND ICE REMOVAL

Snow Warriors worked 12-hour shifts since Wednesday, December 22, and continue to place sand and salt on neighborhood streets and remove ice where possible. Today's schedule will be reduced to two, 8-hour shifts to allow workers to rest. The City will continue full shifts and anticipates that warming temperatures will melt the remaining ice and snow by week's end. The City has used approximately 10,000 tons of salt on this storm and has adequate supplies and funding set aside to purchase more salt as needed.

TRAFFIC

Due to the power outage and storms, there are approximately 20 intersections in Columbus with non-functioning traffic signals. Drivers are reminded to drive safely and courteously, and treat these intersections as four-way stops.

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TREES AND BRUSH

The ice storm caused significant damage to trees, and the City is assigning crews and equipment from the Department of Public Safety's Division of Fire, Department of Public Utilities, Recreation and Parks, Department of Development and Public Service Department to assist in removing trees and brush. The City of Columbus can only remove trees blocking streets or in the public right-of-way, or City trees growing in the right-of-way that fell onto private property. Citizens must address trees on private property, instructions for removing brush and having it picked up are below.

To report trees and brush in the City right-of-way, citizens can call the Forestry Division at 614-645-6640. Trees and brush, especially large chunks which cannot be picked up by Rumpke, can be taken by a private contractor or hauled to Kurtz Brothers. This company accepts wood waste at two locations: 2850 Rohr Rd., 614-491-0868 and 6055 Westerville Rd., 614-882-0200. Kurtz Brothers hours of operation are 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., M-F, and Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to noon.

WATER MAIN BREAKS

Crews from the City's Department of Public Utilities are working to fix approximately 30 water main breaks. Citizens can call 614-645-7788 to report water main breaks

TRASH COLLECTION

Refuse Collection continues to catch up to address affected by the storm and holiday. The Public Service Department anticipates being finished and on their regularly scheduled routes by the end of today. Alley collections have been delayed by low-hanging power lines, these collection areas will be cleared this week. There will be NO BULK TRASH COLLECTION THIS WEEK.

UPCOMING ISSUES

As the week advances, the City anticipates melting snow and ice to lead to several challenges, including new potholes and potential flooding. Citizens can report potholes by calling 614-645-5660.

To prevent flooding, as the week advances, the City's Public Utilities Department will be clearing sewer catch basins at underpasses and in other high-priority areas, such as near hospitals and on major arterial streets. Mayor Coleman asks that residents help this effort by clearing ice and debris from the catch basins in their neighborhood.

Residents are also asked to help in their neighborhoods by shoveling sidewalks and handicapped ramps, once the ice starts melting, and to continue to check in on senior citizens living on their street.

"We are in a full recovery operation now and I cannot say enough to thank the residents of Columbus and our region for pitching in to help their neighbors during this massive ice storm," said Mayor Michael B. Coleman. "We are focusing every section of the City on our recovery plans and are proud of our employees who have put in such hard hours over a holiday weekend. We are encouraging AEP to redouble their efforts to restore electricity to homes and in communications with the state and regional partners to ensure the full attention of the Federal Government to our situation."

(more)

The Mayor's Action Center continues to be open to take citizens' calls and concerns at 614-645-CITY (2489). The MAC will be open for extended hours this week, or as long as the situation warrants.

REMOVING TREES AND BRUSH - Yard-waste guidelines:

Homeowners should exercise caution in removing downed branches or trees on their property, and contact AEP at 1-888-237-2221, or other Utility companies if appropriate, for any branches that are in contact with electrical lines. **CITIZENS SHOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO REMOVE ANYTHING THAT IS TOUCHING POWER LINES.** The City, through a contract with Rumpke, will remove this yard waste only if it is properly bundled as outlined below.

Limbs and branches from a storm will be picked up, **curbside only, on regular trash-collection days**. All residents need to do is follow a few basic guidelines:

- Bundle limbs and branches with string or twine. Bundles should not be wider than 2 feet or longer than 4 feet.
- Place bundles at the curb by 6 a.m. on scheduled trash-collection day.

Christmas Trees will also be picked up under these guides:

1. Remove all decorations and tinsel from trees
2. Cut in half trees that are more than 8 feet tall
3. Place trees at the curb

Only trees that are put out at the curb will be picked up. Trees left in alleys will not be picked up, even if that's where a resident's trash normally is picked up.

There is no deadline for holiday tree collection, so procrastinators need not worry. Trees placed curbside will be picked up on regular trash- collection days throughout the year.